

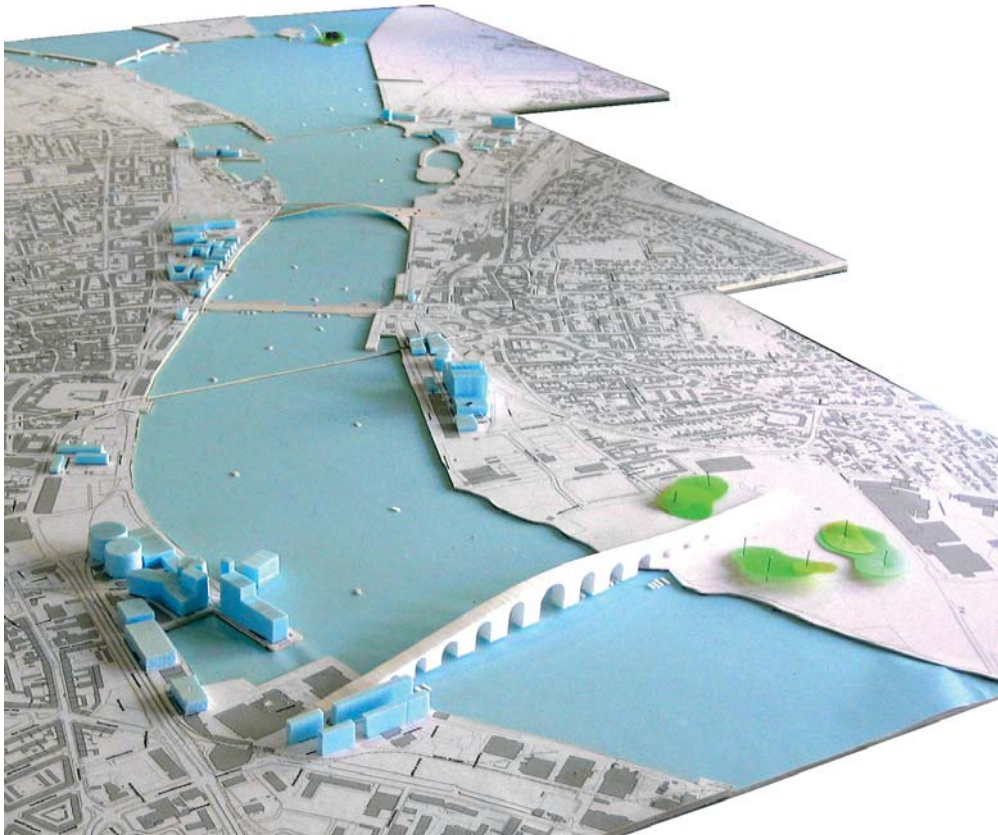
Urban Design Quality and Public Realm



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Learning from the City of Aalborg

KEY POINTS OF LEARNING



Model from Harbourscape workshop

- Given the preferences of property developers for “up-market” offices and residential districts, a key challenge is the danger of harbour areas being converted into new, suburban-like districts with mono-functional structures devoid of significant interest and activity.
- To address this issue, Aalborg is developing an “open opportunity” model of land and activity uses that requires a high degree of assurance that all sections of the population will have access to and interest in utilising this regeneration zone.
- Tools used include a Harbourscape visioning and participation process and a three-part design methodology, both based on key themes of harbour development including: multifunctional programming, the harbour as a “stage”, the harbour as a unifying public domain and the need for a great variety of new public domains along the fjord.



WATERFRONT REGENERATION CHALLENGE IN AALBORG

With a population of 193,000 inhabitants, Aalborg is the 3rd largest city in Denmark. Over the last 10 years particular focus has been concentrated on the reconstruction of the former industrial area along the waterfront on both sides of the fjord which divides the city. The aim of this regeneration is to achieve diversity in city life and variation in the built-up environment, and to reconnect the waterfront with the city.

To do this, it is important to develop Aalborg's identity as a "city by the water" and to utilise the attractive possibilities of the waterside landscape. A strategic plan for the waterfront both on the north and south side was adopted by the City Council in 1999 and is now incorporated into Aalborg's Municipal Development Plan. More detailed local plans are

drawn up as and when the need for regeneration of different areas arises.

The entire harbour area for regeneration comprises up to 200 hectares. Urban development in some areas is almost complete, whilst in other areas it is still at the planning stage. Only a handful of the old industries remain in operation. A new House of Music in Aalborg will be a flagship of the whole redevelopment and the spectacular new building will stand as a landmark to the transformation of Aalborg.

Harbourfront redevelopment will also include other major new public projects. Nordkraft is a former power station located at the harbour. Nordkraft will be transformed into a new centre for culture and leisure. The former cattle market and the new Utzon

Architectural Centre will also be cultural beacons at Aalborg's central harbourfront.

The new situation provides a unique opportunity "to give the waterfront back to the city" and to reiterate the waterfront's special status as the connecting link – as the zone for new inspiration and enterprise and as a bridge-builder between a range of different social activities. In addition, respect for the industrial buildings – in terms of scale, architecture and "narrative" – must be brought more sharply into focus. All social groups must have natural access to the harbour areas and the fjord. This requires that the waterfront is designed for a diverse range of uses. Meeting places, public spaces and landscapes are all to play a role in designing a new waterfront environment.



MIXING LAND USES IN AN “OPEN OPPORTUNITY” MODEL



The regeneration process has proved to be difficult to manage. However, gradually it has emerged that an appropriate response to developers’ strategies for residential and office projects is to be found in planning a carefully balanced mix of different strategies and land uses. In some parts of the waterfront this should ensure that the area’s particular status as a harbour and active zone can be maintained. It is important that the newly designated status of a “land of open opportunities” is protected, requiring a high degree of assurance that different sections of the population will have access to and interest in utilising this zone.

LAND OWNERSHIP AND VIBRANT URBAN DESIGN IN CONFLICT

A battle for control of the development process in harbourside regeneration areas is now in full swing. As with industry’s conquest and regeneration of the harbour 100 years ago, which resulted in the creation of an industrial zone, now developers are in the process of acquiring the harbour’s brownfield sites for exclusive office and residential developments.

Without careful design and interaction with developers, this “up-market” development can result in the area being purged of the life and bustle – and indeed the very harbour atmosphere – that provided the attraction in the first place. A key challenge is that there is a very real danger of harbour areas being converted into new, suburban-like districts with mono-functional structures devoid of significant interest and activity.





LEARNING FROM AROUND EUROPE

Best examples

In this regard, Aalborg has learned from the best examples from abroad. Hamburg, Rotterdam and Amsterdam are all good examples of the regeneration of extensive liberated harbour areas into new civil districts featuring public domains and mixed residential and commercial development in a dense structure with major new transport investment. These areas reflect very deliberate regeneration with public quayside areas, urban spaces and transparency from the water.

Barcelona

Barcelona is an excellent example of the conscious application of an urban space strategy. The process has been characterised by tough and protracted planning work over a period of more than 20 years. It encompasses the regeneration of miles of disused industrial and harbour zone, which has resulted in a bathing beach within the city boundary, 15 km of beachside promenades with public programmes and urban spaces connected to both older and more modern residential housing that lies behind.

Oslo

During the last ten years Oslo has been planning the “Fjord City Project” with high density and high elevations along the fjord based on the principle of “more city at the edge of the city”. This strategy has long focused on the economic benefits of locating housing projects for high-level taxpayers and up-market office projects at the boundary between the city and the fjord and to make this “pay for” the costs of the large freeway tunnel under the harbour. However, owing to public criticism of the density, a gradual change is taking place in which focus is shifting towards ensuring a diversity of public urban spaces in the interface between the fjord and the city. One of the results of this was an international architectural competition on public space design in the large Bjørvika project in 2005





FOUR KEY THEMES ON WATERFRONT REGENERATION STRATEGY

The issues raised in this briefing can be summarised in the following four themes that define the challenges facing the City of Aalborg and the waterfront. These themes have recently been the subject of intense political and public debate and they will remain very much in focus in the planning schemes of the future.

Multifunctional programming of the harbour

Within a complex programming framework, much more importance should be attached to:

- programmes which give harbour-related activities high priority, including existing industrial areas and artisans' districts, harbour-related cultural environments, etc.
- programmes which provide room for experimental buildings and functions which make a positive contribution to "the new economy" in relation to the experience and knowledge industry rather than residential and office development
- programmes which allow certain areas to be used for temporary activities, thereby keeping the harbour zone "open" for future initiatives
- programmes which make a positive contribution to activities and life in the harbour
- programmes which ensure that many people and many different lifestyle groups have a natural pretext for their presence in the harbour area.





The harbour as the fjord city's major stage

This theme focuses on the programming of “the different lifestyle spaces” in the harbour. Planning should ensure that:

- a differentiated range of recreational and activity opportunities are aimed at different sections of the population
- a cultural exchange and co-existence of activities for several different groups is possible
- room for minority groups and ethnic communities is part of the design
- consideration of the needs of young people and senior citizens is put into concrete space design and housing schemes.

The harbour's setting as an urban space design

This theme concerns the urban harbour space's overall spatial design:

- How can development take place such that the fjord is not perceived as a barrier, but rather as a large coherent urban space?

It includes connections and movements along the harbourfront and perpendicular to the fjord. The following questions need to be addressed:

- How can new bridges and new water-based infrastructure give birth to a totally new perception of the fjord as the dominant interaction zone of the unified city?
- How can the architectural setting and the movements parallel and perpendicular to the fjord be brought into play in a new and rewarding manner?

Design of public domains along the edge of the fjord

This theme comprises the physical design of squares and harbour spaces, passages along the quayside in an unbroken sequence with the harbour promenade and the bridges, surfaces and brownfield sites. An objective should be the design of spaces and surfaces along the edge of the fjord, including the treatment of series of squares and landscape spaces along the fjord. With regard to the above, the following are key elements:

- The city's connections to the harbour
- Architectural innovation which takes into consideration the scale of the industrial buildings and the market town
- New functions in industrial buildings along the harbourfront.



The working format was very product-oriented due to the fact that concepts had to be quickly described, designed and implemented in sketches and models. The workshop managers made sure of the necessary progression in the work and that each participant was given areas of responsibility within the concept that had been defined.

Harbourscape Aalborg 2005 was inspired by experience gained from 2 other Waterfront Communities Cities, Hamburg and Oslo. "Bauforum" from Hamburg has in many ways established the

building blocks for a design-based development strategy in urban development. In 2003 the most recent design workshop, "Sprung über die Elbe", was held.

Experience from Hamburg indicates that a fantastic graphical and processual bank of ideas for general planning work has been obtained. Following the conclusion of the workshop, the planning authorities in the federal state and in Hamburg have spent the best part of a year gathering material and incorporating it into the strategic plan.

Another inspiring example comes from Oslo, Oslo-Charrette November 2004, in which the City of Oslo sought to develop different design strategies for the regeneration of the liminal zone between the city and the fjord. The City of Oslo had put together three teams to work on three different scenarios: Oslo Large, Oslo Park and Oslo Network, which each in their own way put forward an overall proposal for opportunities for growth in the city's harbour zone.





THREE-PART DESIGN METHODOLOGY

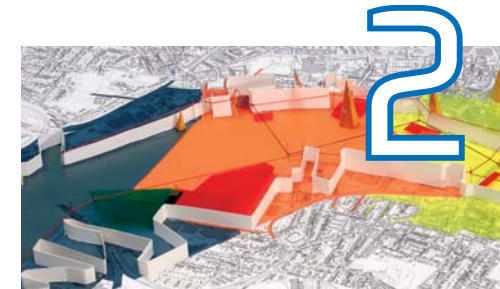
In Harbourscape three different methods are tested with a common point of departure in the specified themes. They are designated:

- Workshop 1: Bridging
- Workshop 2: City Life Planning
- Workshop 3: Fjordscape

Each workshop will result in a proposal for the harbour's future development.



The first workshop concerns building bridges – both physical bridges and functional connections that gather the city around the harbour.



The second workshop concerns multifunctional programming with a point of departure in city life with focus on public domains, open spaces and new activities. This will involve a re-planning of the area to provide all social layers with natural access to a number of new and existing functions in the area.





Finally, workshop number 3 deals with the fjordscape, which focuses on an overall architectural articulation of the build environment along different parts of the fjord. This relates to the different scales and volumes along the banks of the fjord, as well as to the visual architectural links to the landmarks and the skylines of the city behind.



RESULTS



The results of the five days' work are impressive, and the three different points of departure in methodology provide complementary strategies and design. In addition, the visual products provide a suitable basis for further debate, and are particularly well suited to encouraging politicians to discuss more far-reaching visions – images can be created that have not previously been shown. The experience gained here reflects and complements that from Hamburg and Oslo.

Within a period of less than a week it has been possible to put forward a lot of new development proposals with a high level of design quality. The three methods that have been used have different starting points and different areas of focus. This provides a powerful basis for discussing the different methods' strengths and weaknesses in relation to the weighting of the task in different areas of the harbour. It is evident that the methods can complement each other and in certain cases can be combined. Each method compared to the developed design proposal provides a significant starting point for the assessment of the method's usefulness as well as its limitations.



CONCLUSIONS

Experience derived from the design-based working method is that complex programming of the harbourfront is possible and that it can generate promising design proposals. Similarly, the method is applicable in a sort of architectural programming of different areas along the harbourfront.

Another important lesson learned is that “City Life Planning and Design” is a crucial phase of the work and must be carried out prior to the spatial planning and design stage. It is extremely important that the physical designer has a number of objectives for city life at the harbour and that these are described in detail. It is not sufficient to describe these objectives in general terms. It is important that the multifunctional programming is followed up by careful consideration of who will be using which parts of the harbour, what will take place and how the open spaces are to function.

This approach also means that urban space design must take precedence over building design. The entire Harbourscape workshop has had this as its starting point. This applies not only on a large scale, where the design of the harbourscape as a major urban space has been a key theme, but along the fjord the goal has been to establish a number of new public

areas and urban spaces on a small scale and to submit the buildings to this type of urban space design.

Finally, it has proved to be important to learn to combine several overlapping functions in the same section of the harbour. Terms such as “hybrid” harbour spaces, “hybrid spaces and buildings” and “hybrid urban spaces” are used. The multifunctional programming means that a stretch of land or a small area is not reserved for a particular function or user group. The harbour is a public domain in which many different activities can take place either in parallel or temporally displaced.

The results from Harbourscape Aalborg 2005 can form the basis for new developments. However, they will also be able to be subsequently adapted into guidelines for future development and harbour regeneration, public urban spaces and domains, architectural policy and local planning.

Overall, the design-based method is well suited to creating images of a possible future. In Harbourscape Aalborg it was important to ensure that these images did not assume the status of a final design, but that they represent diversity in possible design and show how three different approaches and methods can

complement each other. This aim has been successful and it will thereby be possible to repeat or apply the approach and experience gained from the design-based methods to other areas of development.







www.waterfrontcommunitiesproject.org



WATERFRONT COMMUNITIES PROJECT

The Waterfront Communities Project brings together professionals from nine cities around the North Sea to learn from one another's experiences. Each City has focused on a different aspect of waterfront development, piloting innovative approaches to such challenges and sharing their learning with project partners.

The project is funded by the European Union through the Interreg III B Project.



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